DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

COMPLETE STATEMENT
OF

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BEFORE THE

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION
AND MERCHANT MARINE SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE
UNITED STATES SENATE

ON

OREGON'S MARITIME COMMERCE: PROTECTING TRADE AND SECURING PORTS

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I am Colonel Randall Butler, the District Engineer for the Portland District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on security at our nation's seaports.

As you are surely aware, the role of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, with respect to navigation, is to provide safe, reliable, efficient, and environmentally sustainable waterborne transportation systems (channels, harbors, and waterways) for the movement of commerce, people, recreation and for national security. The Corps accomplishes its navigation mission through a combination of capital improvements and the operation and maintenance of existing navigation projects and structures. Our role in developing the Nation's water highways dates back to the early days of this Nation's history, beginning in the Ohio and Mississippi basins in 1824, and expanding with the new frontier.

Currently, the Corps of Engineers maintains 926 coastal and inland harbors nationwide, including 4,690 deep-draft and 4,619 shallow-draft commercial facilities. It gives budgetary priority to facilities supporting commercial activities. On an average annual basis, Corps of Engineers operations and maintenance at these projects removes nearly 300 million cubic yards of sediment from Federally-maintained navigation channels.

Nationwide, the Corps also maintains 215 navigation locks along nearly 11,000 miles of inland and intracoastal shallow-draft waterways and 23 locks along 14,000 miles of deep draft channels to aid the movement of commodities and commercial products throughout the nation's heartland. These navigation features are the lifeblood of interstate and international trade, generating nearly $700 billion in foreign commerce. In 2000, almost 3 billion tons of goods and services moved through Federally-maintained facilities and waterways.

In addition to commercial traffic, Corps navigation locks also provide an invaluable service to recreational users without charge. The Hiram M. Chittenden Locks in Seattle, for example, passed nearly 50,000 recreational crafts through its lock chambers last year.

Regionally, the Corps maintains eight navigation locks on the Columbia and Snake Rivers system, which benefits some 36 ports in Oregon, Washington and Idaho in the export and import of commodities and products. A number of these ports rank in the top 100 in the nation: the Port of Portland – the nation's 22nd busiest navigation hub; the Port of Vancouver, Washington – the 68th busiest; and the Port of Longview, Washington – the 88th busiest.

While the Corps has no authority or appropriations for port security, we do have a keen interest and vital stake in its effectiveness. The nation's waterways, along with the civil works infrastructure – the locks and dams we operate, are national assets, and as such, we have a responsibility to support security measures to safeguard them.

The events of 9/11 brought a sobering realization that our infrastructure could be at risk. In the months following, the Corps of Engineers initiated an aggressive assessment of all its dams and critical structures and developed plans to increase the physical security of the navigation system.

The need for a security assessment was first discussed in 1997 as part of Presidential Decision Directive 63. Nine Federal and non-Federal agencies, responsible for security of our Nation's infrastructure, developed a process to systematically analyze current security risks at our nation's dams and propose security measures to protect all critical missions of key Federal dams.

We have completed our initial assessments of all 47 dams within the Northwestern Division and for over 300 critical Corps structures across the nation, and developed protection and mitigation measures that are included in individual project reports. Using the funds appropriated by Congress, we are implementing increased security measures.

The locks and dams in the Columbia River Basin are among the highest priority dams within the Division. Our end goal is to protect the dams while at the same time allowing the continued movement of commerce and people and maintaining the environmental and recreational qualities along the river system and through the navigation locks.

Lockages are performed 24 hours a day, seven days a week at Corps navigation locks. The majority of these lockages are of commercial tows or private recreational vessels, with other vessels being owned by universities or federal, state, or local governments. Priority is given to commercial vessels, with recreational lockages scheduled three times each day.

In the wake of 9/11, we have increased our vigilance at our facilities. Operators at each lock maintain a list of the names of vessels that frequent the lock, mainly commercial vessels,

tugs, commercial passenger boats and a several Navy vessels. Powerhouse and lock operators are familiar with most commercial vessels and their crews, and should anything sound or look suspicious, the lock operator may refuse lockage.

The Corps is not only the nation's leader in water resource management, but the nation's premier public engineering agency. Using our expertise and authorities, we are taking additional measures to safeguard the nation's investment in waterway infrastructure and to protect the safety of the citizens in our region. Partnering with similarly committed public and private entities can only strengthen the national resolve and sharpen joint preparedness.

We are learning from the tragic events in New York and Washington D.C. and now have a better understanding who the likely players would be should a similar incident occur at one of our facilities. We have reached out to new and to long-time partners (the U.S. Coast Guard and navigation industry), and are developing new response and communication plans that we hopefully will never need to use.

The Corps of Engineers does not intend to allow the risk of terrorism to cripple our effectiveness as the nation's leader in water resource management. We will continue to execute our navigation mission to the best of our ability. Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you or the other Subcommittee members may have.